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**1999 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORTED FOR
CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS**

SACRAMENTO--“Today marks a significant milestone on the path to the creation of a comprehensive accountability system for California public schools,” State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin said as she released the 1999 Academic Performance Index (API) reports for public schools throughout the state.

She continued, “Ever since I was first elected as State Superintendent, I have been strongly committed to developing a system that sets high academic standards, monitors the progress of schools toward achieving those standards, and provides the support schools need to ensure success. We are making great strides toward fulfilling that commitment.”

The API is the cornerstone of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA--Senate Bill 1X), a Governor Gray Davis-sponsored bill, signed into law in April 1999. This law authorized the establishment of the first statewide accountability system for California public schools. The system includes three major components: the API, the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP), and the Governor’s Performance Award Program (GPAP).

“The Governor and State Senator Dede Alpert are to be commended for their contribution to this important step in ensuring California’s schools focus, like a laser, on academic achievement,” said Eastin. “I also want to commend the members of the PSAA Advisory Committee and the staff at the California Department of Education for making this dream a reality in such a short time.”

The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and progress of schools. It is a numeric index that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. The 1999 API establishes the baseline for a school’s academic performance and sets annual targets for growth. The state has set 800 as the API score that schools should strive to meet.

Eastin noted that the statewide target of 800, adopted by the State Board of Education in November 1999, represents a high level of student performance, attained by approximately 12 percent of schools. She said, “The 1999 API results should be seen as a starting point for our schools. The statewide target establishes where we want all schools to be. What’s important is that, wherever schools are on the API scale, they can and must show academic progress. This improvement in student achievement is the goal of our accountability system.”

The statewide median elementary school API score is 629. The median middle school API score is 633; and the median high school API score is 620. The median means that one half of the schools are at or above that number, and half are below.

The API Internet reports for schools will be posted on the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa> on January 25 at 10 a.m.

Results of the Stanford 9 test, given in spring 1999 as part of the state’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program, were used to calculate the school’s API for 1999. In grades 2–8, the API measures student performance in mathematics, reading, language, and spelling. In grades 9–11, the API measures performance in mathematics, reading, language, history-social science, and science.

Most, but not all, schools are included in the system of API ranking and growth targets. The API and annual growth targets are calculated for elementary, middle, and comprehensive high schools that have 100 or more valid student test scores from the state’s STAR program. Schools with fewer than 100 valid scores, along with alternative schools, continuation high schools, and county-administered schools, will participate in an alternative accountability system to be developed by July 1, 2000.

The 1999 API reports posted today feature two types of rankings for schools. First, schools receive an API score between 200 and 1000, and these scores are ranked statewide in ten groups of equal size (deciles) from one (lowest) to ten (highest). Schools are separated by school category (elementary, middle, and high) and then ranked within category. A second decile ranking (also from one to ten) compares each school’s 1999 API scores to other schools with similar characteristics. (See Attachments A and B.)

Each school's 1999 API report includes the 1999–2000 growth target and the target score for the year 2000. A school's annual growth target is five percent of the distance between the 1999 API and the statewide performance target of 800.

In addition to rankings and targets for the schools as a whole, API scores and growth targets are reported for ethnic and socio-economically disadvantaged student subgroups within the school with large enough numbers to be significant.

“The accountability system, which requires growth by all numerically significant subgroups, makes a strong statement that the achievement of all students in a school is important,” Eastin said. “No student should be left behind.”

Schools must annually report their API rankings in their local School Accountability Report Cards starting in July 2000. Each school district's governing board must discuss these results at a regularly scheduled meeting.

The 2000 API reports are scheduled to be released next fall. These reports will provide new API scores for each school, based on the spring 2000 Stanford 9 results. The reports will show how well schools and their subgroups have achieved their targets, based on growth from the 1999 API.

Schools that meet their school-wide and student subgroup growth targets will be eligible for cash or other types of awards from the state through the Governor's Performance Award Program (GPAP). Schools that do not meet their targets may be eligible for interventions or ultimately state sanctions through the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP).

Close to \$200 million was allocated in 1999–2000 for the PSAA's interventions and awards programs. An additional \$50 million was allocated for the Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Act (Assembly Bill 1114), enacted in June 1999, which provides performance bonuses to teachers and other certificated staff in underachieving schools that “significantly improve” beyond their annual API growth target.

The California Department of Education (CDE) plans to add other indicators of a school's academic performance to the API as soon as they are available. These indicators could include results of the augmented STAR test that is aligned to state-adopted content standards, once the results are valid and reliable; a high school exit exam that is currently under development; and graduation and attendance rates. The law requires that test results make up at least 60 percent of the API.

“We will add other data to the API when we feel confident that the information used is accurate, valid, and reliable,” Eastin said.

Eastin convened a PSAA Advisory Committee of educators and business leaders last year to oversee the development of all components of the PSAA, including the API. A subcommittee of that group worked with researchers and technical experts from universities and K–12 education to create the 1999 API. A PSAA subcommittee on awards was convened in January 2000 to develop recommendations for procedures and eligibility criteria for the GPAP and Assembly Bill 1114.

Media questions about the 1999 API results should be directed to CDE’s Office of Policy and Evaluation at (916) 657-2757. The web site <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa> also has additional explanatory materials about the API, including how the numbers are calculated.

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Attachments